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SUBJECT: CHAVEZ CRITICISM BOLSTERS BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR  
VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN'S VISIT

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Chileans united behind President Bachelet following Hugo Chavez,s criticism of her invitation to Vice President Joseph Biden to join the Progressive Governance Leadership Summit. Chavez,s statements provoked wide-spread public support across political parties for President Bachelet and the visit of Vice President Biden, including the approval of a unanimous resolution in the Chamber of Deputies. Political leaders have been effusive in praise of the Vice President,s visit and the successful completion of the Summit, which has had the effect of bolstering Chilean political unity and pride. Several political leaders described to the Ambassador how fruitful the visit was and how appreciative they were that Vice President Biden chose Chile for the Obama White House's first visit to Latin America. End Summary.

#### Congress Formally Blasts Hugo Chavez

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12. (U) The Chilean Chamber of Deputies on April 3 unanimously condemned the statements of Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez criticizing President Bachelet,s inclusion of U.S. Vice President Biden and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown in the Progressive Governance Leadership Summit in late March. The resolution condemned Chavez,s statements and reminded him to respect the rights of states to conduct their own affairs autonomously. The resolution also praised President Bachelet for the success of the Summit held in Vina del Mar.

13. (U) Several political party leaders expressed support for the inclusion of Vice President Biden at the Progressive Governance Summit and criticized Chavez for his direct jabs at President Bachelet. Radical Senator Jose Antonio Gomez noted that every leader invited to the Summit was important despite their political views. Christian Democrat Renan Fuentealba called Hugo Chavez,s remarks inappropriate, and Eduardo Saffirio, also of the DC, voiced a wide-spread belief that Chavez,s criticism were just populist statements of a politician whose views were far removed from those of democrats. RN leader Sergio Romero stated that Chavez,s comments were those of a totalitarian and were shameful to Latin America.

#### Euphoric Response to Vice President

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14. (U) In recent conversations with the Ambassador, several political leaders expressed appreciation for Vice President Biden's visit to Chile -) the first Obama White House visitor to Latin America. Representative Eugenio Bauer, from the opposition UDI party, said Chavez,s comments helped build a sense of unity among all political factions in support of the Vice President,s visit and against Chavez. Bauer, like Foreign Ministry Policy Director Juan Pablo Lira,

described the Vice President,s visit as extremely positive and successful in moving forward the bilateral relationship.

¶5. (U) During the state dinner, Senate President Jovino Novoa (UDI), Chamber of Deputies President Rodrigo Alvarez (UDI), and Central Bank President Jose de Gregorio sat at the head table with Vice President Biden and President Bachelet. Afterwards, each separately told the Ambassador how productive the exchange was with the Vice President, in addition to being enjoyable in that special setting. The Central Bank President welcomed the long and open exchange, which he describes as &fantastic,8 with Vice President Biden about the economic recovery process in the United States.

¶6. (U) The positive sentiments were echoed by Carolina Toha, the new GOC spokesperson, who commented to the Ambassador on April 13 that the Vice President,s several informal conversations among the leaders at the Summit were frank and honest, and helped build ties among the leaders present. Presidential Advisor Marcos Robledo said the visit was helpful to President Bachelet, bolstering her image as a leader. Toha noted that the government team, including President Bachelet, felt particularly proud at its management of the Summit and the U.S. bilateral event.

¶7. (U) AmCham representative Kathleen Barclay, who also attended the state dinner, was effusive in her comments on how important the visit was for bolstering U.S.-Chilean relations as well as helping boost Chile,s leadership in South America. She described President Bachelet as positively glowing, and added there was a clear chemistry between the President and Vice President Biden.

Comment: Landmark Visit

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¶8. (SBU) Chavez,s commentary about the Summit participants had the fortuitous effect of highlighting Chile's strong ties with the United States and the disdain with which Chavez is held in Chile. The Alianza opposition and the ruling Concertacion rarely agree, but both consider the Vice President's visit a landmark event in the bilateral relationship, one on which the Chileans are eager to build.  
SIMONS